



FCC Meeting

April 9, 2012

Connected Living Introduction & Broadband Pilot Comment

Connected Living is a Quincy, Massachusetts-based company founded in 2006 dedicated to transforming the experience of aging everywhere with successful computer training and adoption programs in 18 states, including Massachusetts, Illinois, Georgia, Alabama, Colorado, Rhode Island, etc. Connected Living's "High Tech, High Touch" approach of combining simplified technology with engaging classes and friendly support ensures that broadband technology is adopted and usage is sustained.

As we are a company driven by social impact, we know that for many, a Connected Life can also be a path from poverty, as it fosters literacy, digital literacy, job training and the skills needed in the 21st century, all of those same critical components of the FCC's Universal Service Reform mantra. It is our intent to partner with an ETC in efforts to bring true service reform to the country, thru the FCC initiative.

We anticipate the ETC as having a major role in delivering the broadband required by the universal reform statutes. But, we know that the success of this program will be based not only in the miles of fiber, pipe and wireless made available, but in the numbers of broadband adoptees who activate and sustain broadband use, through the use of experienced service providers like Connected Living. This is our expertise. Since 2011, we have demonstrated that low-income seniors and persons with disabilities can learn to use the internet and WANT to have broadband access through the delivery of training to over 3700 low-income seniors and persons with disabilities through the recent BTOP program (funded by the DCEO ARRA Stimulus bill).

This is our mission, "Doing Well By Doing Good."

BTOP-Illinois Project Update

"A Look in the Mirror"

April 2012

- Overview. We are approximately halfway through our program timeline and have (thru February) brought 3750 individuals online, graduated 2388 individuals from the Connected Living CLASP Computer & Internet Training Program, and brought 1664 new broadband subscribers online. We continue to work on a great many critical and supportive sub-projects and activities. Outlined below are the high-level summations of several of our activities – This does not include all, but will be representative of many of the actions currently being taken and activities underway.
- Collaborator Building Training. Depending upon which Phase the Collaborator's building was launched, we are either training a new round of Beginner Class Sessions, celebrating with a class full of Trainees as they Graduate, assisting the building's with a Re-Launch Event or conducting higher-skills based Classroom training sessions. Spreading out the timing of our program launches has afforded us the opportunity to learn from earlier program participants and make adjustments as we move along the trainee timeline.

- Assessments. At the conclusion of the 12 lesson beginner or intermediate training session, trainees are given a computer skills assessment in small group or 1:1 settings to evaluate whether they have met program benchmarks and are ready for independent use of a computer. Assessments are moving along a parallel path to the Training. Where there are completed Sessions, the Assessments are taking place. We have identified some barriers (literacy, confidence, etc.) to resident desire to take the assessment, and are trying to facilitate additional best practices (e.g., a week of “practice” assessments may give the residents the needed confidence) to ensure program completion.
- Training/Program Challenges. We continue to observe 2 challenges while delivering computer training program to the lower income population: 1) To continue the acquisition of additional (2nd and 3rd interest tier) participants, and 2) To solidify and maintain the participant connection to learning (resulting in graduation/certification).

Recently, we gathered the following “barrier” information from our Trainer-Ambassadors (Community Program Managers):

- Factors that are non-related to Participant:
 - Broadband not available in their apartments
 - Lack of individual use computers
 - Government programs are “not trusted”
 - Labs are not in a condition that supports learning or in non-available locations (non-airconditioned, lab on difficult-to-access floors, far away from home, etc.)
 - Lack of support by Collaborator Staff
- Factors that Prevent Residents from Meeting Attendance Requirements (9 out of 12 Sessions)
 - Chronic Illness
 - Multiple Weekly Doctor Appointments (common for low-income resident)
 - Work schedules conflict with class sessions offered (e.g., shift work)
 - Unpredictable Care Giving Responsibilities (family members, grandchildren & spouses)
 - Mental Illness (Including Social Anxiety, Depression, Bi-Polar, Schizophrenia)
 - Non-Compliance with Medication Regimen
 - Physical Disabilities (difficult to get to class)
- Factors that Contribute to Lack of Interest in Taking Lessons
 - Disinterest in Learning New Skills
 - Fear of the Ability to Learn New Skills
 - Fear/Mistrust of Internet, The Government and Privacy Concerns
 - Mental Illness (Including Social Anxiety, Paranoia, Depression, Bi-Polar, Schizophrenia)
 - Learning Disabilities (Dyslexia, illiteracy, ADHD, ADD, etc.)
 - Physical Disabilities (low-vision, hearing impaired, stroke survivor, etc.)
 - Non-Compliance with Medication Regimen
- Factors that Prevent Residents from Passing Assessment
 - Learning Disabilities (Dyslexia, illiteracy, ADHD, ADD, etc.) -- 30% Illiteracy rate in IL
 - Dementia / Cognitive Impairment (inability to retain new information)
 - Mental Illness (Including Social Anxiety, Paranoia, Depression, Bi-Polar, Schizophrenia)
 - Non-Compliance with Medication Regimen

- Approach for Continued Awareness and Trainee Growth. The BTOP leadership team uses a full compliment of messaging and marketing promotion to increase program awareness to the low-income population. Best practices include the following:
 - Program Introduction Meeting for the public
 - Graduation Ceremonies open to the public
 - Laptop Workshops for neighborhood participants
 - Incentive Program (equipment, technologies, etc.)
 - Awareness Campaign : Door to Door Visits, Mailing Campaign
 - Flyers to Increase Awareness
 - Exclusively offer 1-1 computer training Intermediate & Advanced Classes
 - Group Skype Class (remote participation)
 - No-contract Broadband options
 - Assistance to completing broadband applications

- Outreach. We continue to work on our external outreach programs – We partner with a wide variety of Vertical markets (senior centers, disability org., churches, healthcare, etc.) across several regions and have them engaged in this program. We are offering several flexible program options to our Outreach Partners, using models that include:
 - Partner’s volunteer-led programs
 - Programs facilitated by our Community Program Managers
 - Programs facilitated by Residents that have graduated our Collaborator’s Resident Training Program

- Volunteers. We have identified a next step to sustain the program -- We offer participation in a Volunteer program (“8+8 Volunteer Program”) to our Collaborator’s Residents (2 per building) who are qualified (having passed their own Training certification) and wish to volunteer for 16 hours per week. For that, they receive a monthly stipend by the BTOP Grant, paid through Connected Living to the Housing Authority. This serves three purposes: it will help the residents on a path to independence, will provide instructors as our program’s transition away from full time Community Program Managers, and it will improve the ability of our Collaborator organizations to sustain the program after Grant funding ends in August 2012. The program is now running successfully in all 23 Collaborator buildings.

- GRADUATION. The CPM’s were encouraged to promote trainees who have passed their assessment with a **Graduation Ceremony**. To date, we have graduated **THOUSANDS OF GRADUATES!** Through this program, we have learned that many of our trainees had never previously participated in any type of “formal” graduation ceremony, giving us a great reason to celebrate with them, their friends and their families. These have been emotional and inspiring events consisting of heartfelt trainee thoughts, video and powerpoint presentations, the award of either the Certificate of Class Participation or Certificate of Broadband Independence and the distribution of earned computers.

- Learning Workshops. Our recent focus has been on Broadband adoption and sustained use by the residents. For that reason, we believe that continued learning increases adoption. We offer workshops where the graduates are encouraged to bring their laptops in order to participate. Recent workshops include “Couponing,” “How to Reduce Your Online Fraud Risk (Illinois Attorney General’s Office), How to Use Facebook, etc.

- Sustainability. “Sustainability” is a key element of our current BTOP grant program “Getting Illinois Low Income Seniors and People with Disabilities Online.” We hope and expect that many of our Collaborators will elect to keep our broadband training program at the end of federal funding, but this is an expectation without a final blueprint. We have begun to chart out and implement how we might sustain the program after the grant.
 - At the trainee level, we define “sustainability” as having delivered appropriate broadband training and fostering adequate confidence and financial conditions that a trainee elects to sustain his/her training through continued broadband usage.
 - At the program level, we define “sustainability” as getting our program to a point where the results are strong enough and the costs are low enough that our current collaborators self-fund or seek further funding for continued broadband adoption efforts.

- Sustainability Building Blocks:
 - Budget / Affordability -- Making the program affordable to collaborators who are currently facing shrinking budget allocations from HUD.
 - Usage / relevance -- Demonstrating that a vast majority of building residents and neighborhood participants have decided to participate in the program and therefore feel that Internet training and adoption is relevant in their lives.
 - Training / Institutional Knowledge – Getting communities comfortable that they possess the resources to continue the training components of the program including access to volunteer or resident trainers
 - Software upgrades & updates – Keeping content and training curriculum fresh to meet current and local requirements.
 - Interest / New Residents – Finding ways to get new residents involved with training so that natural turnover doesn’t dilute each community’s online footprint
 - Ongoing Support – Offering continued support from the remote Connected Living Center and distance training at a low cost to ensure that communities are not left alone.
 - Partner Relationships – Maintaining strong communication and relationships between the training organization (Connected Living), Collaborators, and Outreach Program Partners.
 - Information Sharing -- Disseminating information about our challenges and successes by undertaking a program evaluation effort, documenting stories of individual trainees and entire communities and broadcasting both of these through a dissemination website

- Sustainability Challenges:
 - Budget / Affordability – Shrinking allocations from HUD. Few Collaborators decided to engage with revenue sharing broadband models.
 - Usage / relevance -- Uneven resident usage results across all Collaborators, primarily based on Collaborator involvement, building challenges, resident literacy, learning and socio-economic disabilities identified in resident base.
 - Training / Institutional Knowledge – Collaborator involvement needed to identify and motivate key Volunteers to maintain and grow program
 - Software upgrades & updates – Delivering new content/curriculum appropriate for local demographic requirement.
 - Interest / New Residents – Partnering with Collaborator to introduce program at new resident move-in orientation.

- Ongoing Support – Keep costs at a minimum for remote Connected Living Center access.
- Partner Relationships – Collaborator/building management engagement in program is uneven across participants.
- Information Sharing – Disseminating program information requires engagement of all parties.

We strive to participate in additional programs that seek to expand the distribution of broadband and computer/internet training nationwide. We continue to seek connectivity partners to join us in developing training and adoption programs for government funded initiatives such as the pending FCC Universal Service Fund reform. Connected Living is in the forefront of these initiatives and believes that our expertise and experience brings us to a uniquely positioned advantage to provide training, adoption and comment to the FCC as it strives to expand distribution of broadband nationally.

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